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T H E

C A S E

OF THE REVEREND

MR THOMAS GILLESPIE,

R E V I E W E D.



THE
CASE
OF THE REVEREND
MR THOMAS GILLESPIE,
REVIEWED.
B. J. K
IN A
LETTER
TO
THE REVEREND DR W—R.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by J. REID, in Bailie Fyfe's Close,

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT may not be improper to acquaint some readers, that the CASE animadverted upon in the following pages, made its appearance at the sitting down of the last Assembly. It is calculated to make the members deaf to any overture for reponing Mr Gillespie to the office of the ministry, and capacity of exercising that office within the church of Scotland. Of that office which he then held in the parish of Carnock, and the living annexed to it, he was deprived by a judgment of the General Assembly 1752. The parish of Inverkeithing (which lies within the bounds of his presbytery) becoming vacant, Mr Gillespie declared, that in conscience he could not have an active hand in admitting the presentee to be pastor of that parish, in regard the town-council and great
body

body of the people remonstrated against it. This, and this only, was the hainous crime. The Assembly appointed the settlement to take place, and Mr Gillespie to be present. He still declined ; and, to say the truth, indulgence to the tender conscience could do no harm, for there were members of presbytery who had no scruple. He was however called to the bar, and, in the most unconstitutional, summary manner, deposed, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ, from the office of the holy ministry, &c. At this memorable æra began the deformed monster to lift his head, that system and spirit of despotism, which, more or less, has dictated the decisions of our general assemblies, and particularly of the last one, in rejecting the application made, by some members, to take off that most iniquitous sentence.

A
L E T T E R

T O

T H E R E V. D r W — R.

Edinburgh, July 18. 1770.

R E V. S I R,

NO doubt you have read the case of
your quondam friend Mr Gillespie. Whether you are the author,
as some say, or furnished the materials only, according to others, I cannot say.
One thing is certain, that no one was better acquainted with the secrets of that case
than you, having been, in Mr Gillespie's
younger years, his right trusty and well-
beloved counsellor. Be the author who
will, he has his own share of gall, and
somewhat of a luxuriant fancy too, who
could create such a bizarre being as he has
made.

made your friend, such a composition of the weather-cock and the mule, and that in the most sacred things. Nor is the drapery of this picture, viz. the monkish turn, the solemn gloomy phiz, &c. &c. a whit less ludicrous.

It is not my intention to disprove this fatirical history and description. If false, Mr Gillespie can do himself justice. Nor shall I determine upon the prudence of a late application to the Assembly in his behalf. Only it is my opinion, that the General Assembly, not he, would have gained considerably in the article of credit, by burying far beyond sight and smell, that unconstitutional, despotic, and rotten sentence; a sentence in which that convention assumed a legislative and dispensing power, and that in more instances than one. The stench of it, you may believe, quickly reached London, and was a great nuisance to some of the most distinguished name of the dissenting interest. There are of the deponents, and abettors of that deed, who have

have not forgot, I suppose, that having on a time set forth that sentence in the most inoffensive light they were capable of, a celebrated Dissenter, whom they had invited to spend the evening with them, put an end to the subject, and them to silence, with this single remark: " Indeed, Brethren," said the Doctor, upon these " principles I'll justify all the severity " we Dissenters met with under the late " tyrannical reigns."

THE colouring given it by the Casewriter is so superficial and thin, that the blackmoor appears a blackmoor still. There was no other way, it seems, of depriving Mr Gillespie of the legal benefice. And if any law requires or makes it necessary to pronounce the same sentence upon the scrupulous though erring conscience who declines obedience only from fear of sinning, and upon the vile adulterer, the sottish drunkard, or impious swearer, who wallow in sin; ought the honest man, or an upright judge, to make that law his rule in judgment? Ay, but he tells you, that
it

it was not the same sentence, as when pronounced upon the grossly immoral ; it implied no more against Mr Gillespie, than depriving him of the establishment, and finding him to be no more a minister upon it. But some perhaps will ask, Whence has our Case-writer this authority to comment so contrary to the most obvious meaning of the words, and to palm the gloss of Orleans upon the world? Why, “ so much may be learned,” says he, “ from the latter part of the sentence itself, *and discharge you to exercise any part of your office within this church.*” But this is at best but a sorry salvo and subterfuge. For if the Assembly had authority from the sole Head of the church, to depose Mr Gillespie ; or in other words, if, consonant to the law of Christ’s kingdom, Mr Gillespie was found unfit for and unworthy of the ministerial office in Scotland ; it must be from some other authority or law than that of Jesus Christ, that Mr Gillespie is found worthy of that sacred function in a different part of the globe.

N O R

NOR is this the only point in which I think our biographer a lame civilian and casuist. At the foot of p. 17. he supposes Mr Gillespie restored to full communion with the ministers of the establishment, independent of her judicatories, so as he could employ established ministers, and they him, without incurring any censure. He considers this point in its connections and consequences; and finds, that "it makes a most grotesque figure, no way consistent with the principles essential to every legal establishment." I suspect he has looked through some dark lantern or distorting glass, when he made this discovery. Has he directed us to any civil statute, ecclesiastic canon, or law of holy writ, forbidding the ministers of Christ, who are altogether one in his faith and worship, occasionally to hold communion with, and preach for one another? Has he attempted to shew, what shadow of harm this would do to an establishment, or which of its principles it is repugnant to? He does not pretend to it; but contents himself

self with informing us, that a late Assembly prohibited any such communion in the case of Mr Baine. That is matter of fact, though very little to his purpose, as it is meanly begging the question. That irregular, ill-founded sentence breathed indeed the genuine spirit of the times ; but is as distant from the laws of the New Testament, the spirit and constitution of a Protestant church, and of the church of Scotland in particular, as tyranny is from forbearance, or bigotry from truly-Christian moderation.

BUT though he has not told us how such communion wounds or weakens an establishment, or how it interferes with its essential principles ; yet, to his warped imagination, it appears some how a medley still, productive of discord, confusion, and what not.—As well might he say, that light and love bring forth darkness and hatred, as that brethren living in such unity, and doing kind offices to one another, can be the parent of contention and strife. If he only means, that, from the
folly

felty and corruption of mankind, this factious fellowship may be the occasion of kindling a fire and disputes, and therefore should be suppressed; upon the same principle, Christianity itself will be condemned, and dismissed out of the world.

I HAVE often wondered, why our established clergy were so shy of pulpit-intercourse with non-established brethren, though truly one with them in religious sentiments, complexion, and character. — In a late conversation upon this subject, “I suspect,” said one of the company, “it may be owing to an unlucky discovery made a few years ago by an humorous writer, and adopted by not a few into their creed, viz. *That the church and kingdom of Christ is the STI-*”
 “PEND.” Admitting this maxim to be self-evident, I do not see, that the communion which I plead for can give just ground of alarm. There is no civil statute as yet, which decrees that this brotherly correspondence shall weaken one’s title to teind or vicarage, or infer
 B the

the forfeiture of a sixpence of either. Nor have I met with any law or statute of the kingdom of Christ, making such fellowship criminal, merely because some servants in his house have their living by a legal settlement, others by contribution of the flock of whom they have the pastoral care. And therefore to me it is yet a problem, how this occasional communion is inconsistent with the principles essential to every legal establishment.

To do justice however to our author, amidst all his tremor for the establishment, he confesses, p. 18. that a Relief brother preaching in the Tolbooth church, and an established brother in a Relief pulpit, "may have, at first sight, a friendly and "charitable aspect." And I will presume to add, that upon a second sight, or, if you please, an hundred attentive sights of it, to every unprejudiced mind, it must appear to be acting quite in character as ministers of Jesus Christ. There is as little harm from this to our establishment, and as much consistency in point of character,

ter, as if you were to suppose one Tolbooth-church brother waiting punctually upon the ministrations of Mr J—n W——y, on Lord's days too, and while joining in worship, the very mirror of celestial devotion, in testimony no doubt of the soundness of the preacher's faith, and being harmonious with himself in creed and confession. Or if you were to suppose another Tolbooth-church brother (both the reputed standards of strictness, orthodoxy, and order) attending upon and giving a kind of sanction to the service of the church of England. Ceremonies and rites, we know, are essential to the establishment on the other side of Tweed, but they would be the annihilation of ours. And has Rome now got herself washed so clean from blood and filthiness, that the remotest mimicry of her gives no alarm, mimicry of her vigils, confessions, fasts, abstinences, &c. &c.? Or is it the Presbytery of Relief only who is the dreaded foe and bugbear?

BUT our author finds another difficulty

in the way of communion with that Presbytery, viz. If it took place, it might hurt Mr. Gillespie and his hearers. Candid, benevolent man! How pleasant is such charity and concern from a certain quarter! Nay, though Mr Gillespie embraced the scheme, he suspects it might offend his brethren. "It is a question," says he, "—whether his brethren of the Presbytery of Relief will follow his example." But why does he hesitate here? Is not the principle of the Presbytery of Relief upon this point well known? Does not their practice entirely correspond with it, and declare that they can and freely do hold communion with ministers and Christians of the established church? for they love and honour them much in the Lord.

AFTER such a profession of regard and tenderness for the Presbytery of Relief, could you think that he would vilify them in the manner he has done? *Those of that kidney*, and such like phrases, are sometimes his style. Glorifying is seldom good; but were they disposed to compare and retaliate,

ate, they could point out *a kidney* with whom communion would do one little honour. One deposed by his Synod, another convicted before his Presbytery of very ugly crimes, and retaining the character still of ministers of the church of Scotland; excused indeed from work, but dismissed with a viaticum, or, as some call it, a premium for life. To these they could add a ponderous probationer, whose licence to preach the gospel is yet entire and untouched, to the disgrace of the character, and offence of many.

BUT to recriminate is not to argue or convince; and therefore I shall proceed to the Case-writer's last charge against the Presbytery of Relief. Pag. 24. " Their pernicious measures," says he, " plots, " and schemes, over the whole kingdom, " so far as their influence can go." There is nothing easier, to the unguarded tongue or malevolent pen, than to libel. To keep in generals is unfair. Our author has not specified. By the measures which he re-

B 3 proaches,

proaches, I suppose, he means the settling of ministers in different parts of the country. But let me ask, To whom is this pernicious? Not, I trust, to any worthy minister of the church of Scotland, who knows her constitution, and his own character, and with some dignity supports both. The Presbytery of Relief, like any other society, may and do err; but if I am well informed, they are resolved against the incendiary spirit, and not to kindle little disgusts into a flame, or weaken faithful hands. Nay, their principles permit them, and they can chearfully employ any little influence they have, to forward comfortable settlements within the establishment.

OR does this writer mean to insinuate, that the Presbytery have any plot against our excellent civil constitution? 'Tis scarcely credible; and for one very good reason, that though he does mean so, there is not a man of common sense in the kingdom who would believe him.

THE Presbytery's scheme, it is true, does thwart and expose the pride and power of churchmen, whose wanton and unnecessary severities are laying waste our native country, and, with equal rapidity and baneful influence, extinguishing religion and morals in it; and, by casting the odium of their own tyrannical deeds upon the laws of the land, prejudice many thousands against our valuable constitution, and extinguish that very warm regard for and attachment to our illustrious reigning P—e and family, for which the ministers of the gospel in Scotland, and the people once under their care, but now driven away, were most conspicuous.

INVENTION and every nerve has been racked to block up the avenues of intelligence to civil government, and to prevent its seeing the carnage which church-violence is making in our country; but the land in every corner is a mournful witness, and bleeds under it. The decisions of last

Assembly

Assembly furnish a glaring proof. Three controverted settlements came before them, which, by their authority and sentence, will, it is likely, be effected in favour of the presentees. In these three parishes, I am told, there are well nigh to ten thousand people. But of these the poor unhappy men (for pastors I can scarcely call them) have not, as appears from their calls, twice ten within the parishes to attend upon or reap benefit from their ministry. These are heroic deeds, becoming the gravity and gray hairs of the chairman, and his associates in church-power. Some former Assemblies, with a culpable kind of caution and timidity, dealt only in small parcels; but the Assembly 1770, animated with laudable zeal for the kirk of Scotland, their King and country, have greatly extended their trade. As a convincing evidence of it, there is upon the quay, and just ready to be shipped off from the established church of Scotland, a cargo of nine thousand souls. Where they may land or settle, time only will explain.

LET

LET the sober part of the nation now judge and say, if such abuse must not disgust. Does it not manifestly tend to alienate from church and state? Or do our kirk-rulers indeed think, that the heritors, elders, and people of Scotland have sunk into such stupidity as to believe, that there is no more regard due to them in calling their pastors, than to the broom or bramble that grows in the parish? In very deed little more respect has been paid them of late by our Assemblies.

THESE measures are pernicious with a witness. It afflicts the Presbytery of Relief, that they can do nothing in prevention of them, and so little in the way of remedy. In applying the remedy, no doubt, they may commit mistakes. He shall be accounted a friend who points out the error, and sets them right. At the same time, no man, I apprehend, ought to condemn the Presbytery's

bytery's plan by wholesale, but he whose creed is composed of the few following propositions, viz.

THAT the gospel of Jesus Christ is of very little benefit to mankind, and that another gospel will do the business fully as well.

ALTHOUGH a pastor entering in violently upon a parish, with glaring marks of falsehood and dishonesty upon him, is justly odious to the people, yet may he promote their best interests by haranguing before empty galleries and pews, as well as if he preached, every Lord's day, to a serious attentive audience.

HE who can digest these articles, and adopt them as his faith, must condemn the Presbytery of Relief as a pernicious junto. At present I am an infidel with

regard

regard to the above propositions ; at the
same time,

REV. SIR,

Respectfully yours,

J. B.

